

**Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion With Early Childhood Education Experts in Media, Pennsylvania**

*April 2, 2002*

I just finished a discussion about early childhood development. I want to thank the experts and the teachers and the soon-to-be teachers and those who are running Head Start programs for sharing their knowledge with Secretary Paige and me.

One thing is for certain: In order for all Americans to realize the American Dream, we've got to make sure every child has the necessary foundation to be good readers, good writers, good comprehenders, which means that this Nation must do a better job of focusing our education strategy on early childhood development programs.

We've got to encourage parents to be good readers, good nurturers for their children. We've got to work with Head Start centers to make sure that they've got the curriculum necessary to teach every child the building blocks for reading. We've got to work with States, to encourage States to develop a strategy that will help focus time and attention and resources on the programs that will not only give children the basics for reading but give children the essential nourishment so that they can become ready to compete in the public school system in America.

I assured our panelists here that while I'm spending a lot of time on making sure America is safe and secure, that this initiative is a crucial initiative. It's an essential part of completing the education reforms that Senator Kennedy and Congressman Boehner and both Republicans and Democrats worked on last year and I had the honor of signing.

So this is a great initiative and a wonderful group of Americans that are here to discuss this. I'm real proud of your work. I want to thank you for your care and compassion for our fellow citizens.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. in the Commons/Athletic Center at Pennsylvania State University, Delaware County.

**Remarks at Pennsylvania State University, Delaware County, in Media**

*April 2, 2002*

Gosh, thanks for that warm welcome. It's an honor for me to be here today to talk about a subject that's dear to my heart and a subject very important to the country, which is the education of every child in America.

I just had the honor of meeting with a panel of experts from not only the State of Pennsylvania but from around the country: teachers, soon-to-be teachers, people who deeply care about the education of every single person. I want to thank them for their input. I want to thank them so very much for their idealism. And I want to thank you for your commitment to our country.

Three months ago I had the honor of signing what is called the No Child Left Behind Act. It's a piece of education reform, and I believe we'll have—it was the beginning of a new era of education in America. Through high standards and accountability, we're going to make sure that every school in America is ready to teach.

Now we must take another essential step. We must make sure that every child enters school ready to learn—every child—not just one, not just a few, but every single child. On this issue we know what works, and we know our responsibilities. As parents, teachers, and caregivers, we must give our children the lifelong gift of early learning. And today I'm here to outline specific measures to help meet that goal.

Before I do so, I want to say how sorry I am that my wife, Laura, isn't with me. The reason why is because early childhood education has been a lifelong mission of hers. In Texas and in Washington, she is a strong advocate for reading to our Nation's youngest children. She will work to bridge the gaps between scientists, policymakers, and caregivers on this issue. I'm grateful for her leadership. America is beginning to understand why I asked her to marry me. *[Laughter]* A lot of people are still wondering why she said yes. *[Laughter]*

I'm also honored to be traveling today with Rod Paige, who's the Secretary of Education.